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Carangas—
Chipaya

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The Religion

Preliminary Remarks

Aymara and Spanish influence. The Čipaya /Chipaya/ have probably been Catholic for a very long time. I do not know the date when they were converted but I presume it to have been a long time ago. It is possible that their conversion to Christianity took place at the time when a priest came to settle at Corque, perhaps at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The churches of the neighboring Aymara villages were doubtless already in existence in the eighteenth century and perhaps even in the seventeenth. The one that stands in the middle of the Čipaya clans can hardly be more than 50 years old. The Indians were incapable of giving me information on this subject, as was the curé of Huachacalla on whom the Čipaya depend. These Indians are totally ignorant of all religious doctrine, for only once a year, in June, do they receive a visit from their spiritual shepherd, who has nothing more pressing than to leave this desolate region and this wretched flock. The Čipaya nevertheless insist on celebrating their marriages or the birth of their children at the church; in each of these circumstances they undertake the trip to Huachacalla.

The religion of the Čipaya is essentially pagan as you will be convinced upon reading the following chapters. The relative isolation of this Uro tribe, the often superficial work of the first Spanish missionaries, the worthlessness and lack of zeal of the modern Bolivian clergy have contributed in different degrees to the preservation of the beliefs and practices of the pre-Columbian epoch in this lost village. So many causes must have favored the persistence of the past that it is difficult to explain to oneself /326/ the number of Christian elements which are mingled with the ancient rites. The whole way of life of this fossilized people would make one think